

Now

IN IRAN





EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE OF THE ALBORZ STUDENTS' FOUNDATION ASSOCIATION IN ACTION



FORMERLY A WATER CARRIER BUT NOW AN EVANGELIST IN HAMADAN, HE OFFERS THE WATER OF LIFE TO ANOTHER WATER CARRIER.

Now IN IRAN



CHILDREN WEAVING THE RUGS THAT MAKE TABRIZ FAMOUS.

SUNDAY SCHOOL IS HELD ON FRIDAY IN MOSLEM LANDS THIS GROUP MEETS IN MRS. COCHRAN'S HOME.



had to carry the burden of the work—Dr. Charles W. Lamme, Dr. Rolla E. Hoffman, Dr. Joseph W. Cochran and Dr. Russell Bussdicker, but now at last new missionary doctors have arrived to help them. Schools of nursing operated in connection with the hospitals have been very successful, not only in establishing the nursing profession in a land where women have been kept behind the veil, but also as a means of spreading the Christian message.

A special clinic for men in neglected south Teheran, child welfare clinics, baby clinics, eye clinics, operated in the poorer sections of large cities, serve those whose diseases are all too often the result of malnutrition and insanitary surroundings. Eye clinics are especially popular, for Iran is a land of eye diseases, and there are many blind. In one city alone 2153 eye treatments were given last year in 45 weekly clinics.

Medical itineration into rural areas has increased during the last year or two. Doctors and nurses and their helpers load supplies into station wagons, the gift of American churches, and take to people in isolated areas their only chance for medical care.

The Presbyterian Mission pioneered in leprosy work in Iran, and is still providing medical care and many of the small extra comforts of life for patients in the Leper Village near Meshed, a joint enterprise of the government, the Shrine of Imam Riza and the Mission.

Youth Work. The primary schools that were among the earliest activities in each station grew into secondary schools. The Girls' School in Teheran became Sage College for Women while the Boys' School developed into Alborz College which became known as a "factory where they make men." In 1940 a law forbidding schools conducted by

foreigners made it necessary for the Mission to close down its formal educational work and the property of its schools and two colleges was sold to the government. Contact with students and work for young people, however, did not cease. Primary schools for boys and girls in Teheran, Hamadan and Kermanshah, under the auspices of the Iranian Evangelical Church, have been developed and strengthened. Miss Fatimeh Beha'eddin, principal of Mehr School in Teheran, was a member of the International Fellowship Mission which recently visited American churches.

The Community School in Teheran, started some years ago for the children of missionaries, has grown into an international institution. Last year 296 students, representing 28 different nationalities and eight religions, were enrolled. The 60 Iranians among them had to have special government permission to attend a foreign school. Only about one-fourth of the eager applicants can be accommodated, and every vacancy is filled immediately. All work is done in English, and the latest American textbooks are used. Mr. Commodore B. Fisher, the principal, writes, "The school is filling a big need in Iran. Children from all parts of the country enroll, and from the school they go out to all parts of the world, taking with them something of the knowledge, enthusiasm, idealism and Christian character which they have gotten here."

Some of the money received from the sale of Alborz College has been used to establish and carry on the Alborz Foundation. Designed as an agency to provide a hostel and center for Christian evangelism among students, the Foundation, though only in its third year, is already important to the youth of Teheran. Activities are being carried on in the former hospital compound and include, along with recreation, English classes, Bible classes, discussion groups and conferences where personal problems are ironed out and Christian

counsel given. The hostel provides for a limited number of Christian students. The Foundation also helps students to secure admission to American colleges and assists with all necessary arrangements.

The Youth Center in the heart of the city of Hamadan affords a place where age groups and classes meet regularly, and where friends and inquirers find fellowship and guidance. In Meshed a new property has recently been acquired for similar service. These and Youth Centers in other stations offer not only religious, education and recreational facilities to young people, but often are the only places where there is opportunity for normal social life.

When the government took over Iran Bethel, the girls' school in Teheran, Miss Jane Doolittle, the principal, began a special service for girls and women, meetings with alumnae, classes in English and typing, relief work and similar activities. Housed in property acquired with funds provided by the Sage Committee, and known as the Iran Bethel Center, the work has grown rapidly. The English classes, limited by government regulation to those who have finished high school, are especially popular, and far more young women apply than can possibly be accommodated.

Christian Literature. In 1943 the government passed a law providing for the gradual establishment over a period of ten years of compulsory, general primary education. The goal has not yet been reached, however, and a large percentage of Iran's thirteen million are still illiterate. Following Dr. Frank Laubach's literacy campaign in 1947, in which the government was very co-operative, the six Presbyterian mission stations have carried on

a literacy program. Dr. Laubach's amazingly effective methods and books are used, and gratifying results have been achieved.

Books to meet the needs of the newly literate as well as of the educated classes, are supplied by the Interchurch Literature Committee under the supervision of Dr. John Elder. Charmingly illustrated books for children, thrilling stories for young people, as well as more substantial fare for adults, are being published in increasing numbers each year. Christian art calendars, attractive Christmas cards, a Persian hymnal with music, religious booklets written in Persian or translated from other languages, all help to tell the gospel story. Colporteurs and evangelistic workers sell all of these, and Scripture portions, on the streets of the large cities and in the villages.

The Reading Room of the Teheran Church is a friendly place, daily used by those who come to enjoy the many English and Persian books, or to browse among the religious and secular magazines.

During the war it was difficult to send missionaries to Iran, or for those on the field to return on furlough. Some stayed eight or nine years, with resulting fatigue and discouragement. Now more than thirty postwar recruits have arrived, including six doctors. They have brought new vitality to the work. New young leaders in the Church are also emerging. Together the Mission and the Church pursue the great aim of molding Iran into a Christian nation. They are sure theirs is a strategic task, for:

Iran has historic cultural prestige in the Near East;
Iran alone of the older Moslem countries tolerates the conversion of Moslems to Christ;
Iran, in the providence of God, can become the opening wedge to the winning of the whole Moslem world to Christ.

Now IN IRAN

• **IRAN**, an ancient land with a great past and a promising future, lies in the heart of the Middle East. We have known it as Persia—the land of Cyrus, Daniel and Queen Esther. Its artistic treasures are unsurpassed and its cultural heritage is superb. It is a spacious land of high plateaus and bare mountains.

IRAN has a scanty population, yet poverty is widespread under its age-old feudal system of land ownership. But its people are eager for a better life and large stores of oil can provide ample resources for modernization. The Shah on his recent visit to the United States emphasized the friendship of the two peoples and asked our aid.

IRAN has been a Moslem state since the seventh century. Its people are Shi'ahs, a branch of Islam considered unorthodox by the Arabs who are Sunnis. The Aryan ancestry of the Iranians led them to modify the rigid Semitic form of Islam. Yet Shi'ah Islam has lamentably failed to give Iran's people stability of character and the true knowledge of God.

IRAN was occupied by troops of the Great Powers in both World Wars. Its position between Russia and India has made it a perennial buffer state. In World War II, American service battalions kept a steady flow of supplies moving across Iran to our Russian allies, enabling them to repel the German invasion.

IRAN today is overrun by Soviet agents appealing to its landless peasants and restless city populations. Islam has no positive answer to Communist propaganda. Only Christianity can truly meet Iran's needs and build the foundations for a renewed nation.

The Church. The Christian Church now seems firmly rooted in Moslem Iran. Mission work was begun 115 years ago. The earliest American missionaries were located in the northwest province of Azerbaijan, where they worked largely among Nestorian Christians known as Assyrians. The first station was at Urumia which after a long and outstanding history was closed in 1934 by the government, on the ground that it was in a politically troubled area. New stations were opened after 1870 and today our missionaries are resident in Teheran, Tabriz, Hamadan, Resht, Kermanshah, Meshed and Babol (occupied in 1949).

From the beginning, Moslem fanaticism made the growth of Evangelical Christianity slow and difficult. Among Armenians and Assyrians progress was made, but approximately 96% of the people are Moslems, and for a Moslem to become a Christian requires a high degree of courage. The convert has been treated as an outcast, cut off from his family, often deprived of his source of income, possibly even in danger of his life. Yet the Church has

grown, and includes in its membership people of many nationalities and widely different backgrounds. Now fanaticism has waned somewhat and more and more converts from Islam unite with converted Jews, Armenians and Assyrians to make up the Iranian Evangelical Church. In the Church there is a great ideal of unity, and a favorite hymn is "Ittehad dar Masih, Ittehad,"—Union in Christ, Union.

Dr. John Elder writes that "religious interest is appreciably rising. Rampant nationalism and atheism have evoked a new determination on the part of the religious to defend and proclaim their faith." The many faiths, each claiming the allegiance of its followers, the strong appeal of Communism to the under-privileged, and the hopelessness of many educated young Iranians, combine to create confusion in the spiritual scene, and to increase the difficulties of the Christian church. Yet from Teheran a missionary writes, "The church is growing and is alive." Greater interest in a summer Training School for Evangelists, the welcome given the evangelistic itinerating teams and the urgent demand for more Christian literature are all encouraging signs of this growth and vitality.

Hospitals and Clinics. The effectiveness of medical work as a means of making contacts has been unusually apparent in Iran. Moslem mollahs (priests) who fanatically opposed the missionary on religious grounds gratefully kissed the hem of the mission doctor's garments, and fierce Kurdish chiefs have saved the lives of missionaries out of gratitude for the service rendered their people by the mission hospital.

Lack of missionary staff, inadequate equipment and a shortage of trained Iranian doctors and nurses are ever present handicaps, but today there is a hospital and a thriving medical program in each of the Presbyterian stations in Iran except Teheran and the out-station of Babol. The Christian hospital in Teheran was operated by the American army as a rest center during the war, and since then adequate missionary personnel has not been available to reopen it. There is an urgent need for well-trained Christian national doctors to help in mission hospitals. In the last few years four veteran American doctors have

VILLAGE WOMEN SPINNING THE COTTON THREAD FROM WHICH THEY WEAVE ALL THE FAMILY CLOTHING.





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